



WISCONSIN

DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Division of Economic Support

Bureau of Welfare Initiatives

**TO: Economic Support Supervisors
Economic Support Lead Workers
Training Staff
FSET Administrative & Provider Agencies
Child Care Coordinators
W-2 Agencies**

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Non W-2 ☒ **W-2** ☒ **CC** ☒

PRIORITY: High

SUBJECT: EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

CROSS REFERENCE: BWSP Operations Memos 98-39 & 98-45
Other Programs Manual, Chapter 3

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

PURPOSE

This memo provides clarification on amendments to Emergency Assistance (EA) in 1999 Wisconsin Act 9, including new conditions for eligibility, the appropriate verification of those conditions, and a new version of the application for EA.

SPECIAL NOTE:

Local agencies that subcontract for the administration of EA are responsible for communicating these policy changes to the subcontracted agencies.

BACKGROUND

Previously, EA was available to needy persons facing a current emergency due to fire, flood, natural disaster, energy crisis, or homelessness. Act 9 expands EA eligibility to persons who are facing impending homelessness due to a financial crisis.

NEW POLICY

Wis. Statute 49.138 (1m)(intro.) has been amended to read, "The Department shall implement a policy of emergency assistance to needy persons in cases of fire, flood, natural disaster, homelessness or impending homelessness...."

Wis Statute 49.138 (1m)(am) was created to define "facing impending homelessness." A family will meet this definition if, "the family is experiencing a financial crisis that makes it very difficult for the family to make a rent payment, mortgage payment or property tax payment and the family has been notified that it will be required to leave its current housing if it does not make this payment immediately."

As a result of these changes, families who are imminently homeless may now receive emergency assistance. There is no minimum time that a family must have lived at the current residence to be eligible for assistance.

VERIFICATION BY AGENCIES

To provide EA for impending homelessness, agencies must verify these 2 conditions:

1. *The notice to terminate tenancy received by the family.*

The notice to terminate tenancy can be either:

- a. A 5 day eviction notice from a landlord
- b. A notice of foreclosure from a bank or local government

The EA agency must verify this notice with the issuing party.

2. *The family is facing a financial crisis.*

A financial crisis must be due to an emergency that makes the family unable to make their rent or mortgage payment. This financial crisis may include, but is not limited to the following:

- a. Loss of wages due to illness or injury of a member of the EA group
- b. Loss of employment that does not include voluntarily leaving appropriate employment without good cause
- c. Loss of income due to a second parent leaving the group
- d. Car repair expenses that are necessary for transportation to work
- e. Medical expenses that are not the responsibility of a third party
- f. Other conditions determined reasonable by the W-2 agency.

APPLICATION

A copy of the revised EA application is attached. You may photocopy and use this version until the printed version is available.

Question 17

Question 17 now includes a box for applicants to check “Impending Homelessness.” After checking this box, applicants should skip question 18.a. and answer question 18.b., which asks them to describe the financial crisis that makes them unable to make a rent/mortgage payment.

Question 20

For question 20, in cases of “Impending Homeless,” staff should check the applicant’s response to 18.b., which must meet the definition of “financial crisis” provided in this Operations Memo. This definition will be included in the next release of the Income Maintenance Manual (IMM), Chapter VIII, Part B (the EA material in the Other Programs Manual will be moved to the IMM). Use this Operations Memo as a guide for the definition of “financial crisis” until the IMM revisions for EA are released. If the applicant’s description of their financial crisis does not meet the above definition, then check “Not an eligible emergency.”

Question 21

For question 21, “Enter Verification Source,” staff should list the type of notice to terminate tenancy received by the family, and staff should include the date they verified this notice with the issuing party. Staff should also describe the type of verification of the financial crisis described in 18.b. (i.e., a medical bill, a bill for car repair, a layoff notice, etc.).

OTHER IMPACT

No other aspects of the existing EA program will be affected by this expanded eligibility. A family will continue to be eligible for EA once every 36 months on the basis of impending homelessness or homelessness not the result of fire, flood, natural disaster, energy crisis or domestic abuse. Those families experiencing homelessness or impending homelessness because of fire, flood, natural disaster, energy crisis or domestic violence will continue to be eligible every 12 months. Other financial and nonfinancial eligibility criteria continue to apply.

ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

DWD will promulgate Administrative Rules to address further issues related to this change in EA. The Rules may require agencies to confirm that a landlord who receives a payment on behalf of a client facing impending homelessness will not proceed with eviction on the current 5-day notice. We will issue further operations memos as needed to clarify the Administrative Rules. These changes and guidance on the application will be released as part of the IMM.

DWD/BWSP/WPS/CJ